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Authenticated by: D. Stewart

August 4, 1975

Informal notes on meeting in President's office

Thursday morning, March 5, on Berlin

The meeting lasted about two hours and the following attended: the President, Vice President, Mr. Herter, Mr. McElroy, General Twining, Governor Hoegh, Allen Dulles, Attorney General Rogers, Secretary Anderson, George Allen, General Persons, Gordon Gray, General Goodpaster, James Lay, Major Eisenhower and myself.

The discussion covered a good deal of ground but the following seemed to me the principal points on which a decision was made or guidance given by the President.

(1) The President expressed himself as being dubious over the wisdom of the resort to the UN. Mr. Herter explained the pros and cons and told the President that Cabot Lodge would be working with the British and French UN representatives on this general subject.

(2) The President remarked without elaboration that the idea of a blockade of the Soviet Union left him cold. Mr. Herter explained this was only in the stage of exploration as to feasibility and effect.

(3) There was some discussion as to whether or not the GDR would be regarded by the International Court of Justice as having the same status in international law as the Federal Republic. The general consensus seemed to be that it did.

(4) The President referred to the fact that on one of his recent visits to the hospital the Secretary had said that he felt the general public in this country was insufficiently aware of the gravity of the Berlin situation.

(5) On general mobilization in the United States, the President said he could think of nothing worse. The Soviets could prolong the crisis and place us in an impossible position of strain and controls.

(6) The President said he had the impression that Adenauer had weakened on the free election issue and that in

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other respects had given the impression to the Secretary that he was tending to withdraw from past established negotiating positions.

(7) General Twining reported with his endorsement Norstad's request that cuts in the numerical strength of US Army forces in Europe should be suspended and 7000 new men be sent from the United States to his command. The President said the result would be largely psychological but he thought that this was a good idea.

(8) The President agreed in response to a statement from Twining that we should stop dependents from going to Berlin but that no announcement should be made of this fact. It was unclear as to the intended timing of such a step. (This raises problems of the psychological effect on the West Berliners as well as the problem of US tourists.)

(9) Twining suggested as possible moves the Chiefs were considering in the second phase sending the Second Fleet to the North Sea and sending another Army division from the United States to Germany. The President expressed some doubts on this.

(10) There was considerable discussion as to whether or not "stamping" should be the break point. The talk was inconclusive.

(11) The President expressed himself vigorously as believing that it would be impossible to apply force to reopen communications if they were blocked to Berlin unless the Germans, French and British were with us and probably all of NATO.

(12) Twining reported on the military measures being taken quietly now but they seemed to be confined to those we know about relating exclusively to patrols, communications, etc., on the autobahn.

(13) Twining indicated that a garrison airlift if needed could be handled with little if any augmentation to the aircraft now in the theater.

(14) I took it that the President agreed that some further carefully calculated steps should be taken to render the American people more aware of the gravity of the situation shaping up. Announcement of this meeting and plans for meetings with the Congressional leaders were steps agreed upon in this process. There was no mention, however, of any plan for an imminent speech by the President.

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(15) Following immediately after the President's opening remarks Mr. Herter gave a summary of where we stood on the matter of contingency planning and attempted then and repeatedly during the course of the general discussion to focus consideration on the four main questions on which guidance or answers seemed required. These were:

1. What steps should be taken to educate the public?
2. What military preparedness moves should be taken if access to Berlin is forcibly interrupted?
3. Are we prepared to use all necessary force to reestablish communications with Berlin not excluding resort to nuclear weapons?
4. In the event our allies are unwilling to pursue the latter course of action, should we be prepared to go it alone?

LJM

Livingston T. Merchant

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